MACKEY *is sitting at the counter.* HE *is the country editor of the local newspaper, The Gilbert Gospel Mail, and perhaps is the best educated man in town. There's a dry wit about him, and* HE *hides his keen intelligence behind country apparel and selected bad grammar. Probably many consider him the town Communist.* HE*'s a shrewd one, but* HE*'s learned in a small town that you have to trim back your sails and a bit of your spirit to get along.*

DOATSY MAE. (*Placing down beer.*) You want some pie with that?

EDSEL. Naw, that pie's been in that case so long it'd be like eatin' an ol' fren'.

DOATSY MAE. I hope you ain't gonna sit around playin' Will Rogers all mornin'. This ain't the day for it. You're gettin' nearly as handy with your mouth as the Sheriff is.

EDSEL. At least I ain't made no guest appearances on the "Watchdog" TV program.

DOATSY MAE. Can you believe they put him on TV, snortin' and acussin' and ashootin' that old thumb-buster of his? Run it right on TV.

EDSEL. I always said Ed Earl was the best argument I can think of for tough gun-control laws.

(TWO BUSINESSMEN *enter in a dither.* RUFUS POINDEXTER, *an automobile dealer who is also Mayor of the town, is dressed in a conventional suit and tie;* C. J. SCRUGGS, *insurance man and President of the Jaycees, is dressed in a super flashy sports coat, loud slacks, and louder tie.* HE *looks to be running for the Best Dressed Man Award and coming in last.* THEY *cross to a small table near the counter.*)

RUFUS.—which is shit for the birds.

DOATSY MAE. Mornin', boys.

RUFUS. Mornin, Doatsy Mae.

C. J. SCRUGGS. Hi, darlin'!

RUFUS. I've had calls from four preachers, six deacons, and the presidents of two garden clubs. Don't know why I let people talk me into serving as the mayor of this incorporated sandtrap anyway.

C. J. SCRUGGS. Well, my insurance customers called me all night long. Half of 'em insisting I sign that damn petition to

close the Chicken Ranch, the other half threatenin' to cancel their policies if I do.

(THEY *sit at the table and exchange muted greetings with* EDSEL, *not anything effusive.* THEY *are the town's go-getters and leading lights, where* EDSEL *is more a thorn in their sides.*)

EDSEL. Mornin', Mr. Mayor.

RUFUS. (*Upset.*) Mornin'.

EDSEL. C. J.

C. J. SCRUGGS. (*With disdain.*) Edsel.

DOATSY MAE. (*Bringing them coffee automatically.*) Y'all wanna cripple that with a little dab uh cream?

C. J. SCRUGGS. Naw, I need mine as strong as bear hair this mornin'.

DOATSY MAE. Eggs or anything?

RUFUS. Naw, I'll do well to keep this down.

(DOATSY MAE *crosses back to her station behind the counter.*)

RUFUS. (*Continued.*) Damn Ed Earl Dodd for a pluperfect fool! That old fart'd screw up a two car funeral.

C. J. SCRUGGS. Well, I'd hate to see him be made the fall guy, when the whole town's knowed about Mona's place since Christopher Columbus.

RUFUS. Aw, C. J., his time's past. He can't run around here in the 1970's actin' like Matt Dillon with a toothache!

C. J. SCRUGGS. Maybe the Sheriff ain't the only one livin' in the past, Rufus. The Chicken Ranch served a purpose once. Aww, but everythang's opened up today. Why we've underwent a world wide sexual revolution.

DOATSY MAE. Well, it ain't reached 909 East Watermelon Drive.

RUFUS. How do y'all read the public's pulse about all this?

EDSEL. Oh, about fifty percent outraged and fifty percent self-righteous.

RUFUS. Well, I'd like to offer a little civic leadership. But I'm not damn fool enough to do it until I know which way the people want to be led.

(*The* SHERIFF *enters.*)